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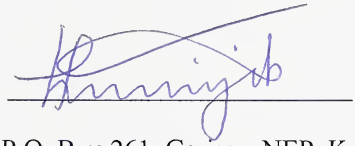

P.O. Box 261, Garissa, NEP, Kenya

14/4/2003
Date

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

GENDER DIMENSIONS OF FOOD SECURTY AMONG SOMALI PASTORALISTS IN NORTHEASTERN KENYA

By

Habiba Dayib Mohamud

A PROJECT

SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF RURAL ECONOMY IN PARTIAL FUFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF AGRICULTURE

IN

RURAL SOCIOLOGY

DEPARTMENT OF RURAL ECONOMY

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DEPARTMENT OF RURAL ECONOMY

The undersigned certify that she has read, and recommend to the Department of Rural Economy, for acceptance, a project entitled **GENDER DIMENSIONS OF FOOD SECURITY AMONG SOMALI PASTORALISTS IN NORTHEASTERN KENYA** Submitted by Habiba Dayib Mohamud in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF AGRICULTURE IN RURAL SOCIOLOGY.

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14/4/2003
Date

Dedication

Dedicated to my grandmother, Fatuma Ali, may peace be upon her.

Abstract

This study is based on an extensive literature review of the existing structural causes of food security among the Somali pastoralists in Northeastern province (NEP) of Kenya, with a special focus on the role of gender in food security. The study embraces the principles of "entitlement" and "capability" approach, where Sen's approach is used as a framework to the extent of poverty, vulnerability, and marginality among Somali pastoral people in NEP. The documents reviewed suggest that the patrilineal system, in combination with climatic changes favouring aridity, demographic pressures, and numerous other impediments have lead to the impoverishment of pastoral communities. In order to enhance agricultural productivity, this study recommends a gradual process of reforming inheritance patterns to allow women to have a share of livestock.

The study presents new opportunities and demands to revitalize the pastoral sector and improve household food security in NEP, especially in the event of droughts. During droughts emphasis could be placed on building on existing traditional methods for milk and meat preservation. The review of documents also suggest raising the productivity of pastoral women through restocking programs and micro-enterprises. Sharing work responsibilities between Somali pastoral men and women may be an option to alleviate women's intensive work and provide more attention to preparing for drought. It is my hope that the findings of this study will illuminate the important influences of gender in policy effectiveness and will influence policy makers, development workers, and extension agents about ways to improve the overall conditions of food insecurity in NEP, Kenya.

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1.0 Introduction and Background

1.1 The Problem

The Northeastern arid land of Kenya, predominately inhabited by the Somalis, has lagged behind in all spheres of development (Farah and Haji, 1990). Historical evidence shows that due to droughts, and other socio-political trends, the colonial administration under the British rule was ambivalent about the benefits of economic development in northern Kenya (Hogg, 1986; Barber, 1968). Hogg (1986) has also argued that the colonial legacy disqualified the pastoral rural poor from the benefits of national development. The Kenyan government has invested very little in pastoral people, opting instead to invest in urban areas, emphasize export crop produce in price policies, and undertake subsidy expansion in modern sub-sectors (IFAD, 1992; Lipton, 1977; Barret, 1996; Smith, K; Barrret, C; Box, P. 2000; Chambers, 1983).

A study by the Welfare Monitoring Survey (WMS) in 1994 indicated that the prevalence of overall poverty in Kenya was highest in the Northeastern Province (58%), followed by the Eastern Province (57%), and the Coast (55%), while the lowest poverty rates were the Central province (32%), followed by Nyanza (42%). Poverty has been identified as an area of concern for the country as a whole, yet it wears a predominantly female face (GTG, 2001). A recent study shows that the overall national incidence of poverty in 1997 in Kenya stood at 52% (WMS, 1994; PRSP, 2001). The same study indicates that statistics for women are gloomier, with 63% of women in the rural areas living below the poverty line.

Beyond the policy bias and droughts, sectoral and technical services appear ill equipped to assist with the complexity of pastoral livelihoods. The Somali people are migratory by nature, making it difficult for the necessary government services to be delivered, especially in times of hardship. Likewise, although there have been commendable efforts by relief organizations in drought-stricken parts of East Africa, these organizations rarely seek out migratory populations. The harsh nature of the region has therefore been compounded by the lack of regionally directed policies to service the needs of these people. As things are and continue to be, pastoralists in northern Kenya are becoming more and more enmeshed in what Chambers calls the "poverty trap" (Chambers, 1983: 111-39). Chambers has described the poverty trap as it relates to pastoralists in northern Kenya where he looks at poverty from inside out and finds what leads to vicious circles of poverty in which the poor are caught. He speculates that a lack of both political power and income creates vulnerability to the pastoral poor, which leads them to live in isolation, promoting powerlessness and perpetual poverty. The central theme in his rural development writing is that rural poverty is often unseen or misperceived by outsiders, making the circle of poverty worse. Among the outsiders according to Chambers are the development professionals, the bearers of modern scientific knowledge who often direct external interventions in poor communities in the name of improving rural livelihoods. The ways in which poverty is misperceived is explained in the following sections.

Historically, men in East Africa were the targets of development interventions as they were assumed to control livestock, water, and pasture land (Dahl, 1997).

Administrators and experts ignored women's roles in pastoral production and their overlapping rights in most livestock work and livestock products (Hodgson, 1999), and directed all of their training to men. Men were now able to not only assert themselves as the 'owners' of livestock, but as the 'experts' on livestock as well (Potash, 1989).

Gender discrimination deeply rooted in the Somali culture remains a formidable barrier to women's participation in family and household decision-making processes, and hinders their access to and control over resources (UNDP n.d.). Despite Islamic laws that provide for female inheritance, customary practice among the Somalis grants rights of livestock inheritance and ownership to males only, except in unusual circumstances. Women manage most of the livestock production activities, perform all domestic tasks including food preparation and firewood collecting, and are the key persons responsible for rearing children. Somali pastoral women make substantial contributions to herd management yet do not have the right, for example, to dispose of these livestock independently, even in the absence of their spouses.

In view of the above problems, food productivity in this region has dwindled over time. Social-cultural and political trends responsible for the lack of food sustainability have to be seriously confronted to counter poverty, chronic malnutrition, and an over-reliance on food aid prevalent in this region. A sound understanding of the structural and functional dynamics of pastoral environments is necessary if governmental and non-governmental organizations are to provide better options to generate an adequate livelihood for present populations, while maintaining management options for future generations. Measures to enhance equal participation in household and livestock

responsibilities can reduce care burdens for women. As a matter of practical social necessity, however, this change is not a minor retooling; such changes require a fundamental paradigm shift.

In view of the aforementioned problems, this study focuses on the structural causes of poverty as it affects pastoralists in northern Kenya, with a special focus on the role of gender in food security. The first section lays out an introduction to the issue of food security in NE Kenya and the role of women in food security. In this section, I also introduce the region's setting and cultural information about the Somali society of Kenya. Section two describes theories about threats to food security and why women are often more vulnerable to poverty or food insecurity. The section also lays out the main theoretical framework and ends with literature on nomadic women. Section three has a brief description on my methods of data collection and analysis, and the arguments that I make about the mechanisms for poverty and gender in Northeastern Province (NEP) of Kenya. Section four discusses the likely consequences of gender inequality with regards to food shortages, and suggests some possible mechanisms to improve the above conditions. The final section concludes the study by recalling the study's objectives, summarizing the study's findings and policy implications, and suggesting some possible further research.

1.2 Significance of the study

Northeastern Kenya is one of the most food-insecure regions in Africa. In times of drought, these herding communities either lose their entire livestock herds or remain with less than the minimum herd size required to meet subsistence needs. Many of the herding

communities consequently resettle in the countryside. The region is also prone to natural disasters that are particularly difficult for women, given women are more likely to stay behind, while husbands leave their homes to find employment. Elderly, the sick, women and children are generally left behind, and thus are particularly vulnerable to food shortages, starvation and related diseases. In such crises, some women camp with their children along roadsides waiting for relief handouts. Some die solitarily while others move to market centres to eke out a living selling charcoal or firewood, and cheap handcrafts. Others find temporary employment as domestic servants, casual labourers or find refuge in famine relief camps (Dahl, 1979; Hogg, 1980, 1982, 1986; Merryman and Merryman, 1980), and some who are more fortunate, may obtain some assistance from extended family members in urban areas.

People need food to survive, and if household members were able to devote all their energy to producing food, most households would have a surplus. In my observation as an agricultural extension agent for eight years, the hands-off attitude on the part of men has placed heavy demands on pastoral women's time. Additionally, labour available to subsistence households in most of the pastoral population has become increasingly scarce (Dahl, 1997). Extreme poverty forces pastoral men to move hundreds of miles to find urban work, mostly in the dry season when the labour needs of the pastoral economy, particularly for watering, are high. Herding labour is also often in short supply. Wife's abandonment by husbands, divorce, widowhood and polygamy reduce the amount of labour and income contributed to families by men. Women have become heads of

households and must work longer hours in order to meet household needs to compensate for the absence of their spouses.

Incidentally, despite the substantial and significant body of scholarly work on changing gender relations among African peoples who are primarily cultivators, the gender relations of predominantly pastoralist peoples have been, with a few notable exceptions, excluded from historical examination (Worley, 1991). The contemporary crisis of African pastoralism literature seldom discusses issues of pastoral women's contribution to livestock production. As a result, policy makers have tended to ignore the services provided by pastoral women (Dahl, 1987; Hodgson, 1999). Agricultural policy and administrative agency decision makers have failed to recognise women's central contribution to the livestock sector, and consequently have done little to develop policy and outreach that will integrate women into development efforts (Hodgson, 1999). Furthermore, published research information on Somali pastoral women, particularly of analytical value, is very much limited and reflects a parallel gap on this topic in policy debate (Talle, 1988). Given the involvement of Somali women in almost every aspect of pastoral production, and the key role they play in their community and in their domestic environment, it is surprising that few ethnographies or other social science studies have focused on women's unique pastoral livelihoods. As a result, the relationship between pastoral women and property rights has remained virtually unexposed, and remains the biggest constraint to food security in Northern Kenya.

There is, therefore, a need for in-depth analysis that reflects both a good understanding and a critical view of the social conditions of poverty among these pastoral

communities. As a basis for policy and program development in the region, there is the need for a reorientation of research priorities that give greater attention to the political, socio-economic and cultural processes that underlie the apparent growing pauperisation of large sections of the pastoral population in northern Kenya.

This study is initiated in the light of aforementioned factors, and is also significant in that it will make a useful contribution to studies of agricultural women, where there is scant literature on women in pastoral systems. In addition, it will offer insights into gender relations among the Somali pastoral society and explore solutions to problems of food security that are related to these relationships.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study examines gender dimensions of poverty among the Kenyan Somali pastoralists in Northeastern Kenya. I examine the food security situation and assess how food insecurity is related to gender roles and relations. More specifically, this study has three principle objectives:

- Describe the major factors leading to food insecurity in pastoral households of the Somali people in Northeastern Kenya;
- Compare the roles of women and men in food production and the associated socio-economic relations in Somali society;
- Show how the nature of relations among men and women contribute to increases in the incidence of poverty among Somali women, and suggest measures to rectify the situation.

This study is informed by first hand experience, and academic and government literature, to offer suggestions to planners and policy makers about ways to effectively attend to pastoral women's needs. This research report should also be of value to development planners in natural resource management who wish to improve agricultural productivity and women's access to agricultural earnings in Northeast Kenya.

1.4 Kenya's Profile

1.4.1 Physical Background

Kenya is located approximately between 3o N and 5o S and between 33o E and 44o E longitude. Along its southeastern border, for 400 kilometres, is the Indian Ocean. To the Northeast lies Somalia, to the north Ethiopia and Sudan, to the west Uganda and to the south Tanzania. The total area is 582,644 km2 (Morgan, 1988) and according to the 1998 projections, Kenya has a population of about 28 million (GOK, 2000). Every type of landform can be found, from glaciated mountains to dry deserts, representing all the stages in East Africa's geological evolution. Its altitude ranges from the sea level to 5,199 metres at the top of Mt. Kenya (Morgan, 1988).

In most of the country, rainfall is unreliable and more critical for cultivation than temperature. Rainfall is adequate for agricultural activities in the west of the Rift Valley and Lake Victoria region and falls in one season (Morgan, 1988). East of the Rift Valley, rainfall exhibits a bimodal pattern with the long rains falling from March to May and the short rains falling from September to October. Rainfall is greatest at the Coast and in the highlands. The other areas below 1,200 metres are semi-arid and arid. Of the total area,

arable land makes up about 4%; pastures 6%; parks and reserves 8%; forests and woodland 6% and the rest, 76%, is semi-arid and arid (CBSG, 1990).

1.4.2 History and Government

As recently as the 1880s, "Kenya" as a country did not exist. After the 1884 Berlin Conference, the British colonized part of East Africa and drew boundaries around the country, naming it Kenya. Prior to the arrival of the British, each of Kenya's peoples had its own form of government, culture and economy. The British imposed their own administration, and through their economic, religious, and educational activities, they transformed the Africans' way of life.

The colonial administration encouraged British and South African whites to move from their homelands to settle in Kenya. The loss of high potential land by the Kenyan farmers to the British immigrants brought resentment against the colonial administration, and in 1952 a war of liberation between the Kenyan guerrilla group called the Mau Mau and the colonial government began. The Mau Mau, made up of members of several Kenyan ethnic groups (primarily Kikuyu), led the struggle. The Mau Mau rebellion, as it was then called, took place immediately after World War II mainly in the highlands, where the Kikuyu people claimed their land had been stolen from them. The Mau Mau movement ultimately led to a larger social movement for independence, which was won in 1963 (Morgan, 1988).

Kenya adopted a democratic parliamentary form of government. Initially a constitutional monarchy, in 1964 it declared itself a republic within the Commonwealth of Nations (now the Commonwealth). The dominant political party since independence,

the Kenya African National Union, became the only legal party in 1982 and remained so until 1991 when multi-party politics was introduced. Throughout the post- independence era, Kenya has followed market economy policies (GOK, 1994).

1.4.3 Settlement and Economic Activity

Kenya has more than 43 different ethnic groups, posing a potential problem of communication. Swahili and English have been selected as national languages, and most people speak at least one of these as well as their own local language. The people are also divided among many religious groups. African traditional religions are widespread, as is Christianity, which was spread by missionary groups in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Islam is particularly well established along the coast and in the Northeastern regions.

In the early 1980s, it was estimated that Kenya's population was increasing at the rate of about four percent a year (Carroll, 1988). This growth rate, one of the highest in the world, greatly increases the demand for land, housing, food, jobs, education, medical care, and other services (EIU, 1990). Although this growth rate is falling at the moment, it is still high enough to place a severe strain on the economy in a country whose resources are extremely limited.

Kenya's economic potential and human settlement patterns are closely linked to the agro- ecological characteristics of different regions of the country. The country is divided into seven agro-ecological zones. Eighty per cent of Kenya is arid or semi- arid (zones five through seven) and has little farming of consequence, though it now supports about 20% of the country's population. In these zones, pastoralism predominates, although occasional shifting cultivation (especially in times of good rainfall) can be found.

Traditionally, Kenyans living in these areas have relied on livestock for their basic food needs, but acceptance of cereals is increasing.

Kenya is a developing country with a diverse range of industries playing different roles in the economy and national development. The main economic sectors are agriculture, tourism, mining, power generation and communications. The major constraint on the economy is the rapidly growing population (Carroll, 1988). Livestock is an important sector of the economy, especially in the semi-arid and arid areas of the country, such as the Northeastern province, where arable farming is not possible.

1.5 General Description of North Eastern Kenya

1.5.1 Background

Eighty percent of Kenya is classified as rangeland (Pratt et al. 1966; Pratt and Gwynne 1977; Ayuko 1978). These areas are unsuitable for rainfed cultivation because of climatic and, or, topographic limitations. It has an annual rainfall of less than 350mm, which is highly variable and unpredictable. The rainfall is bimodal with long rains between April and May and short rains between November and December. Day temperatures are around 34°C and temperatures do not fall below 20°C at night. The soils are mostly sandy, either derived from basement rocks or alluvial in origin.

Plain landscapes predominate with a vegetation that can best be characterised as commiphora[1](commiphora erythrea) bush land, well suited for such an arid environment

---

[1] Trees and shrubs species that are predominant in the African rangelands and are important for livestock browse in the drier parts of Africa, especially for goats and camels.

(Pratt & Gwynne, 1977). Northeastern Kenya has an approximate total land area of 126,902 km^2 (see figure 1), and is the third largest province in Kenya. It comprises three districts, namely Garissa, Wajir and Mandera. It is bordered to the east by Somalia, to the north by Ethiopia, to the west by Moyale and Isiolo districts and to the south by Tana River and Lamu districts. Wajir district is the largest and covers an area of 56,601 km^2, followed by Garissa (43,956 km^2). The province constitutes approximately 31 % of Kenya's rangeland.

The province has three rivers: Tana river, which is the largest permanent river in Kenya, which flows along the south-western edge of Garissa district. The Ewaso Nyiro river, located in southern and South-Eastern boundaries of Wajir district, is ephemeral and flows for only three to four weeks during the rainy season, although it is permanently upstream. The Daua river in northern Mandera flows between three to five months a year, depending on the rains.

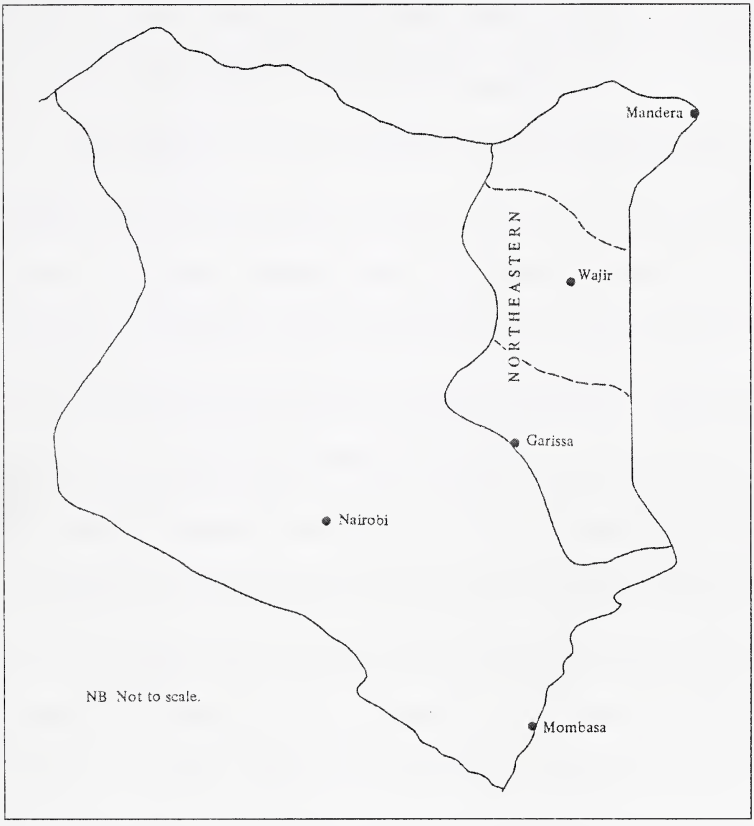
Northeastern Kenya is mostly inhabited by, as mentioned earlier, people of the Somali ethnic group and has an approximate population of 961,000 with annual growth rate of 3.8% (GOK, 1998), and a population density of five persons per kilometre. The Northeastern Province (NEP) is the least densely populated region in Kenya. Northeastern Kenya has an arid environment inhabited by nomadic people whose livelihood depends on subsistence pastoralism. A small percentage (15%) of the population is engaged in trade and wage employment.

1.5.2 Economic Structure

The province's economy is mostly agricultural, based primarily on livestock and secondarily on crops. Pastoral economies make a large contribution to national economic activity, especially through the production of milk, meat, hides and skins, and other products for domestic processing and consumption. The animals are also important as traction, especially for ploughing, and provide foreign exchange earnings through their export as live animals and animal products. Manure production of livestock also contributes to farming. In Kenya, over 10% of government tax revenue comes from the traditional pastoral sector. In 1990, for example, agriculture contributed about 30 % of the total GDP of which livestock was responsible for just over 15 % (MOA, 1995).

In areas where the rainfall exceeds 350 mm annually some Northeastern Kenyans engage in the cultivation of quick and drought tolerant crops, though these areas constitute less than 5% of the province. For example, millet and sorghum cultivation is possible in such areas. Under these environmental conditions, pastoral ecosystems in the communal arid rangelands of Northeastern Kenya, therefore, tend to display both pastoralism and parcels of crop production.

Figure 1: Map of Kenya Showing the Study Area.



1.6 History of the Somalis

By carefully studying the unsupportive social dimensions of food security, I hope to reveal a dynamic previously unexplored, come up with suggestions for improvement

1.6.1 Historical and Cultural Information

The Somalis of Kenya are part of a much larger group of Somali people, who inhabit almost the entire horn of Africa. The majority of the Somali people live in the country of Somalia. Somalis are also the principal inhabitants of South-Eastern Ethiopia, the country of Djibouti, and the Northeastern province of Kenya. There are perhaps six million Somalis in total (Jimale, 1995 Ed.). The history of the Somali people dates back to about 1000 AD (Jimali, 1995 Ed). Linguistic, cultural and historical evidence indicates that Somalis originally came from the southern highlands of what is now Ethiopia. Anthropological studies indicate that the pastoral clan-families trace descent agnatically from an ancestor called Samaale who is generally regarded as the source of the name "Somali" (The proper word is Soomali; the word Somali is from two words, Soo and Maal, 'go and milk', referring to Somali pastoralism) (Lewis, 1961).

Ethnically and culturally, the Somali tribe that spans portions of Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Djibouti is one of the most homogenous ethnic groups. The great majority of the Somalis speak the same dialect and share the Islam religion. The Somalis accepted Islam between the 1200s and 1400s. A man is allowed four wives under Islamic law and polygamy is widely practised. Divorce is the prerogative of men only and is easy and common among them (Ahmed, 1992).

Somalis are traditionally nomadic pastoralists, though each clan and sub-clan has maintained established boundaries for their herding area. Pastoralists raise camels, cattle, sheep and goats. Somalis have a culture primarily centred around camels, especially valued for their ability to survive in an environment of scarce water and grazing, and provide milk, meat, and transport of goods. The camels serve as a measure of wealth and status among all rural Somalis, and urbanites, who often leave their herds with rural relatives but still retain an interest in pastoral production. Women and young children care for sheep and goats while the young unmarried men and boys are responsible for the highly esteemed camels.

In a land that has an average rainfall of less than 100 mm a year, the Somalis' lives are entangled with finding water and grazing land for their livestock. Formally, their diet consisted almost entirely of milk and milk products but now includes maize meal and rice, likely due to increased interaction with urban dwellers who usually eat these staples. Families live in portable huts; each wife has her separate hut made of bent saplings and woven mats. A village generally consists of a group of huts for the related families arranged in a circle or semi-circle, with livestock pens in the centre.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Definition of key terms

To avoid confusion I define some of the terms that are central to my study. Food security has been defined as access by all individuals at all times to an adequate diet for an active healthy life (World Bank 1986; FAO 1994; GOK 1996). Food accessibility is the determining element of food security, that is, the state in which households have continuous access to food supplies that fully satisfy the nutritional and dietary needs of all its members at all times (Frankenberger et al., 1993).

Although the Kenyan government food policy orientation now recognises the importance of focusing on food security at the household level (GOK, 1994), central strategies are still geared towards solving problems that relate to a general decline of food productivity (IFAD, 1992). As a result, improved access to food has continued to be perceived as coupled with increases in production and improvements in marketing and storage at the national level, rather than at the household level. In sum, food security incorporates not only the traditional idea of ensuring adequate food availability, but also the need to create the social and economic conditions that empower households and individuals to gain access to food, either by producing it themselves, earning income to buy it, or food aid. Household food security levels will therefore depend on ability to access any of these food sources and the intra-household management practices for utilizing acquired food.

The term gender is a social concept that addresses male and female roles and relationships. Gallin and Ferguson (1991, 3) note three principal ways in which gender is interpreted: as a social role, as a social relation and as a practice. Gender as a social role places emphasis on what women and men do. Gender as social relation focuses on differences of power between women and men that result from economic and political structures, including those associated with every day life. Alternatively, gender is a relational concept that focuses on men and women in terms of their roles, responsibilities, obligations and entitlements. Finally, gender, as a practice, addresses how women and men use social systems to achieve desired ends, either individually or collectively.

In this study, I focus on gender roles and social relations within the context of the Somali community in northern Kenya. Gender roles and social dimensions of gender define what men and women do, the degree to which women and men have access to and control over resources and how they each benefit from their work. The roles and relationships are patterns of interaction that are rooted in historical patterns in the division of labour, religion, kinship, and are continually recreated through evolving changes in the Northeastern provincial context. Factors such as education, technology, economics and sudden changes like war and famine influence changes in gender roles. Different societies have different socio-cultural attributes, values and norms that are assigned to men and women, boys and girls. These attributes are learnt and change over time and vary within and between cultures. Gender is, therefore, socially constructed. As Merryman (1978) argues, social roles, social position and lifestyles of men and women are not rooted in physiological sex difference but are socially constructed within a

particular culture (see also Morgan et al., 1995). Roles identified with female gender (feminine roles) are usually not valued in social and economic terms (Cook, 1994), hence women occupy more or less "subordinate positions in most social and cultural contexts" (Doyal, 1995: 7) and end up poorer than men. Doyal (1995) calls the pattern of discounting certain roles as 'cultural devaluation', which manifests itself in numerous ways that will be discussed in this study.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is Amartya Sen's influential "entitlements and capabilities ethic" which is built on the basic needs perspective. Entitlements here refer to socio-cultural consensus about resource allocation: who deserves what, who is worthy of what and how much, and who is perceived to be entitled to a good and who can be deemed unworthy. Sen (1983: 754) explains that entitlements are decided by a society's larger cultural beliefs about distributional justice. On Sen's account, women end up poorer than their male counterparts in all socio-economic groups not because of poverty as such, but because of culturally determined consensus about their "worth." The cultural measure of that worth determines women's relative access to the available goods and resources, such as material goods (food, health care, clean water, resource endowments, etc.), and immaterial goods such as education.

On the basis of these entitlements, a person can acquire some capabilities, which Sen defines as what a person can do or be; hence the role of entitlement is through its effects on a person's capabilities. Examples of capabilities might include "the ability to be well-nourished, to avoid escapable morbidity or mortality, to read and write and

communicate, to take part in the life of the community and earn self-respect, to appear in public without shame, and crucially for women, the ability to think, reason and to live one's own life" (Sen 1990a, 126). Sen holds, and I agree, that the entitlement and capability ethic allows one to critique social structures and cultural traditions that keep societal members from achieving their full potential. Social norms and customs, and discriminatory legislation influence entitlements and are responsible for women's lack of resource ownership and power over resource decision-making (Sen 1981, 1983, 1986).

Using these basic definitions of entitlements and capabilities, I can discuss the structural impediments that drive poverty in NE Kenya, and how this affects what these pastoral women in question actually are able to do and to be. According to Sen's framework, resource right ownership is a key entitlement most women do not have, which has implications for sustainable food security in Africa (Aslanbeigui et al., 1994; Sen 1981, 1983, 1986). One implication of this framework is that poverty should not be viewed narrowly in terms of a single indicator, such as the amount of calories required per day, or the amount of money to meet the minimum daily requirements. It should be conceptualized in broader terms, including ownership of productive resources, levels of education, and access to training and participation in development issues.

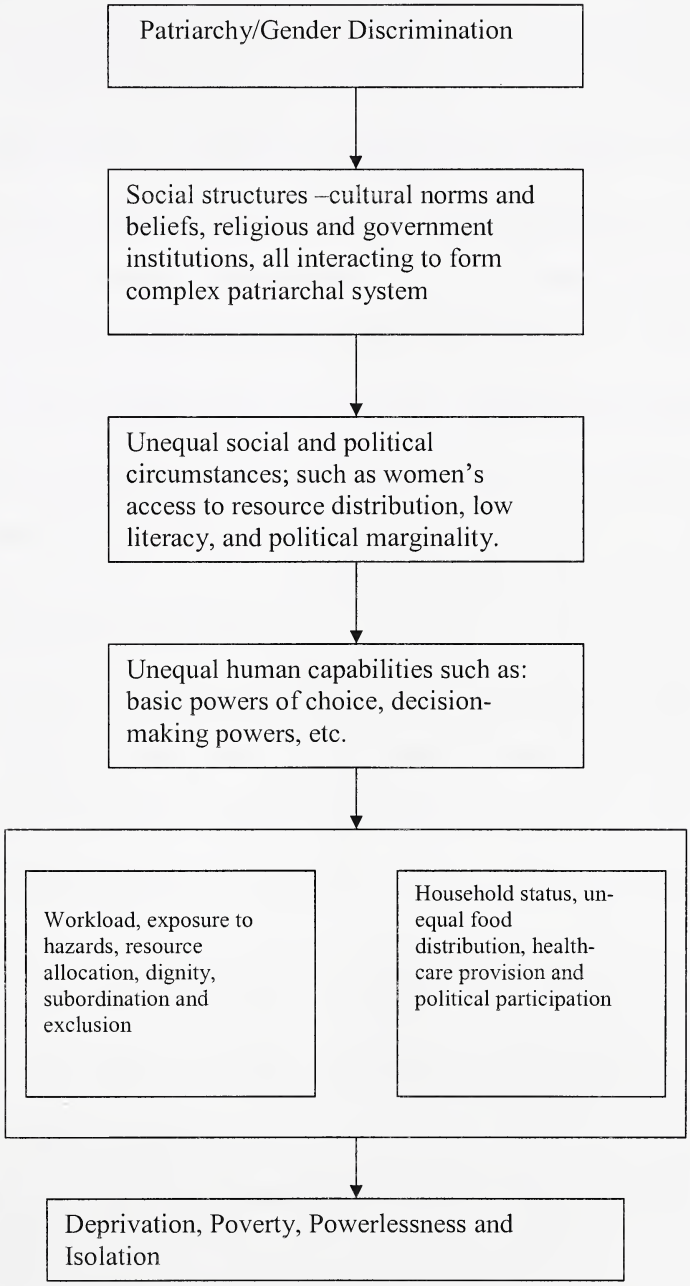
Sen argues that the development of human capabilities leads to greater well-being in society and within the household. Female rights to livestock and access to other livestock related resources will not only stimulate food production but give women greater bargaining power in their household division of labour. Additionally, research

evidence shows that women "trickle down" their resources to the entire family (Rathgeber, 1989).

The entitlement approach has numerous applications and could lead to some important policy consequences. Its relevance to this study is, therefore, to document in concrete terms the consequences of social customs that marginalize women as right-holders in livestock, as actors with a voice in the community, and as resource decision-makers within their households.

Through this framework, attempts will be made to analyse gender inequalities in ways in which it perpetuates lack of food security. The entitlement and capability approach will also allow me to make several policy recommendations to raise the social status of rural pastoral women.

Figure 2: The framework- Entitlements and Capabilities:


Patriarchy/Gender Discrimination
Social structures –cultural norms and beliefs, religious and government institutions, all interacting to form complex patriarchal system
Unequal social and political circumstances; such as women's access to resource distribution, low literacy, and political marginality.
Unequal human capabilities such as: basic powers of choice, decision-making powers, etc.
Workload, exposure to hazards, resource allocation, dignity, subordination and exclusion
Household status, un-equal food distribution, health-care provision and political participation
Deprivation, Poverty, Powerlessness and Isolation

Together social institutions, property relations and a number of gender expectations interact to make some aspects of women's subordination appear surprisingly natural, just and appropriate to the women themselves. The gender-based differences in access to all productive resources, socially valued work and cultural resources, privileges men at the expense of their female counterparts, and limits societal recognition of the important contribution women make to pastoral livelihoods. Policy makers and program providers to women may be unaware of the possibilities for social change and may be willing to accept the legitimacy of the established order. By invoking the notion of "gender dimensions of food security in NEP" in my study, I emphasize the structural causes of poverty in the Northeastern Kenyan pastoral community to call attention to "taken for granted" systems that perpetuate poverty.

2.3 Nomadic Women: an overview

The literature on pastoral societies throughout Africa, the near East, Asia, in parts of Europe and the Americas, tends to ignore women's economic activities, social status and, especially, their role in livestock management (Horowitz & Jowkar, 1992). As a result many livestock agents have perceived the role of women as centered within the domestic sector. Their perception is that men are more productive in supporting the family. Women have been perceived as homemakers, and, therefore as staying at home and caring for the children. A common stereotype of pastoralism is that men tend to perform the significant aspects of animal husbandry. However, as I discuss below, a critical assessment actually shows that such a stereotype needs to be qualified.

2.3.1 Gender Division of Labour in Pastoral Management

The division of labour for pastoral societies is organized by sex and age. Men's work has generally been associated with herd management and women's work with the house and children. As a result, the extent of women's involvement with livestock has usually been underestimated. In fact, the balance of work is such that women frequently spend more time than their husbands on animal care (Talle, 1988).

Unquestionably, women in pastoral societies have an important role in socio-economic and cultural activities, and if these socio–economic contributions are disregarded, there is high risk of underestimating the particular contribution of women to the productive process (Dahl 1987; Horowitz and Jowkar, 1992). Pastoral women are closely involved in caring for young and sick livestock as well as caring for animals kept near the homestead. Their involvement in activities related to birthing and caring for the newly born animals is fundamental to the pastoral economy (Worley, 1991; Talle 1988; Adan, 1988). Nomadic women also dismantle and rebuild their houses when the herd is moved to new pastures. Men are responsible for slaughtering animals and digging wells. Older men are responsible for planning and decision-making with regard to livestock, while the younger unmarried men and boys perform most of the herding. Complementary responsibilities of both men and women include the feeding and watering of the herds, castration, vaccination, and the building of enclosures for the animals. While women can and do assume male tasks of watering, grazing, milking of camels or night watch, especially when men are absent on labour migration, most of the Somali men usually do not carry out the feminine tasks of cooking and caring for children, the elderly, and sick

animals. Women are responsible for child rearing and usually for food provision. Mat weaving and tent making are often female duties.

A pastoral production system rarely focuses on a single product but rather makes use of both "continuing" products (calves, lambs, and kids; milk, ghee; manure; and occasionally blood) and "final" products (meat, hides and skins) (Horowitz and Jowkar, 1992). When milk production generates a surplus above household and herd consumption requirements, women sell it to market centres. This income is not treated as personal income but rather is used for family food purchases or taken by the husbands for personal use (Barbara, 1990). Similarly, reporting from Somalia, Little (1989) documents the central role played by women in the camel milk trade both in large urban areas and small settlements. The decentralised nature of the milk market in both large urban areas and small settlements, the relative durability of soured milk, and the low initial capital investment facilitate the participation of distant pastoralist women in milk marketing. Market sales of milk allow women a degree of cash autonomy when they have access to the money from the sales (Horowitz and Jowkar, 1992).

In most pastoral societies, men only very rarely do milking and especially the management of milk resources, although if animals range far from a settlement, men will milk the cows (Dahl, 1987). Oxby (1987) reported that in most cases, women's major contribution to livestock centres around the caring for stock kept close to the campsite. Such stock normally consists of small flocks of sheep and goats, or large animals requiring particular attention. The latter category may include pregnant cows, newborn calves and animals suffering from disease or injury.

Merryman (1987) notes that the active contribution of women to agricultural labour has been one of the most significant social changes among the settled Somalis on irrigation schemes along the Tana river. In the nomadic sphere, women tend goats but otherwise childcare and domestic duties confine women to the hamlet, and, consequently, the limited female contribution to subsistence is a function of lack of mobility. One contribution that is often overlooked is that by staying home with children women are reproducing the labour force of society.

2.3.2 The Status and Property Rights of Pastoral Women

Within each livestock management unit, rights over animals and their products are differentiated by sex and age, with older men generally being privileged in the ownership and disposal of animals through sale and slaughter. Men's ownership rights over animals are guaranteed by a universal gender-discriminatory set of inheritance rules rooted in the Somali androcentric kinship systems (Dahl, 1987). Additionally, sharia through the Muslim law grants daughters only half the inheritance rights enjoyed by sons. Unfortunately, these inheritance laws, despite their religious validation, are not always respected. This is often the case among Somali women, for example, whose paternal kinsmen retain custody over their animals (Dahl 1976; Adan, 1988; Little; Barbara, 1990).

Even where women have inherited or otherwise acquired livestock, they enjoy less freedom in the selling of animals than men. Adult men's typical role as head of the household legitimizes their decision-making with regard to disposal of all household stock. This inclination of pastoral societies to be androcentric is also reflected in

women's absence from formal political institutions. Decisions regarding seasonal movement of livestock, conflict resolution, and diplomatic relations with neighbouring groups and the State are made and represented by older men.

On the other hand, Somali pastoral women have direct participation in milking. By virtue of their mothering and domestic responsibilities, women usually decide how to allocate milk between human and animal needs (Adan, 1988). Women decide how much milk they can take for home consumption, and how much to leave for the calf. This means that they are generally responsible for the management of milk, the availability of milk to the calves, and, hence herd productivity and herd viability. As mothers, women's interest is primarily focused on their children. Women's role in the distribution of milk grants them high status by the virtue of their control over the future welfare of their children, over hospitality, and over the growth of the household's herd. Men as owners of animals prefer to allocate milk to young animals to quickly build and accumulate livestock for wealth and influence. The separation of women's and men's decision making responsibilities over milk allocation can at times become competitive and lead to marital conflicts and interpretative disputes over women's milk rights (Oxby, 1987).

2.3.3 Threats for Nomadic Women: Environmental Degradation

Hjort (1976) noted that traditional systems of land use in arid regions are based upon the assumption that land is not a scarce resource. Generally, a well-defined area of land is owned by a tribe or a clan, and its members have the right to herd their animals there. This observation is in agreement with Lamprey (1983) who pointed out that although pastoralists are, for the most part, rational in their adaptive behaviour, which

enables them to achieve their primary goal of survival, it is apparent that survival at the subsistence level is commonly achieved without regard to the maintenance of savannah habitats. The implication is that communal land ownership is synonymous with open access pastures, a situation where Hardin's tragedy of the commons paradigm (Harding, 1968) is expected to operate. Under such circumstances, individual users have no incentive to restrict their own use, knowing others will not either, and all herders abuse the commons. Birdsall (1989) points out that if property rights or communal obligations and enforcement are not well-defined, the risks of land degradation are likely greater. One such example, Birdsall asserts may be the Kenyan arid lands, where uncertain property rights and common property resource management obligations contribute to environmental degradation, and in some ways to permanent desertification.

Land squeezes, caused by a rising population and land degradation, are marginalizing more pastoralists. A weakening in the pastoralists production systems have played a major role in the process of disrupting the nomads' capital base and has shaken the foundation of their social organization (Dahl and Hjort, 1976). The weakened traditional adaptive strategies include a reduction in herd diversification, herd dispersion and reciprocity among neighbouring pastoral communities (Hjort, 1976). Other traditional forms of redistribution of livestock wealth that make it possible for individuals to build up herds are also in decline, including the practice of raiding neighbouring tribes, gift-giving to ritual leaders for distribution to poor community members, and bartering with neighbouring pastoral communities. Furthermore, the shrinking of range resources as a result of encroaching cultivation, overuse of water resources, water development that

is inconsistent with the proper principles of range management, and recurrent droughts, are the biggest current problems facing the nomadic societies (Abdinoor and Farah 1999; Ayan, 1981; Farah and Haji, 1990). The plurality of these factors has lead to degradation of pastureland and an increase in the amount of time that has to be spent caring for young, sick and feeble livestock that are kept at the homestead.

Moreover, degradation of pasturelands contributes to the deterioration of both animals and fodder supply, which combines to increase women's burdens in terms of basic provisions for their households (Pointing, 1995). Any deterioration in the quality of grazing is also rapidly translated into a reduction in milk products. Thus, pasture degradation has a particular impact on women by further reducing the milk supply that is so critical to household food provisions and to women's incomes.

Wood shortages are another aspect of resource reduction, which have particular repercussions for women. Women are responsible for collecting firewood and often for house building. Firewood collection has become increasingly time-consuming and tiring, as women must walk longer distances to find and gather sufficient firewood and construction materials.

The section below explains the study's methodological approach and presents the range of qualitative procedures for data management and analysis.

3.0 Methodology

This study relies on secondary information and my eight years experience as an agricultural extension officer in the study region. The process of data collection has involved searching, reading, synthesizing, and analysing literature. Since pastoral populations frequently traverse vast areas poorly served by transport and other infrastructure, my ability to collect primary data was prevented by cost and time allocation under my Commonwealth scholarship status.

Essentially, the study has relied on three basic sources of data: published academic research findings and international proceedings, administrative records and reports, and unpublished theses and dissertations. Characteristically, Somalis have rich indigenous nomadic culture and patrilinearity, a situation where customary law predominates. Limited information about them was available from the University of Alberta library and the interlibrary loan system, and therefore, access to data was not an easy task. Nevertheless, using keywords and indexes of bibliographies, I obtained texts and reports that were related to my investigation. Several bibliographies suggested sociological journals that contained information related to my study on nomadic-pastoral women. Through inter-library loan I acquired some government records and reports, and dissertations from libraries in other Universities, especially Kenyan Universities. My other source of materials was from Kenya, where I acquired a number of policy documents from various Ministerial offices, such as the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural development, Ministry of Finance and Planning, and the Ministry of Education. In

preparing this study, over 200 articles, books, and reports about pastoralists and development were examined, nearly all written in the past twenty years.

My main method of analysis was to take notes on each article or document I read in regards to the structural conditions of poverty and gender. Subsequently, I typed my hand-written notes according to recurring themes, especially as they fell into entitlements and capabilities as described by Sen in his writings on poverty throughout the 1980s and 1990s. I used these recurring themes to develop an outline for my paper. I generated common concepts and themes from the descriptive data to generalize my findings. Examples of the most important social concerns that emerged from the reviewed literature include causes of poverty (see structural causes of food insecurity in section 3.2) and ways to address poverty (shown in the section on policy recommendation in this study). I also identified some of the underlying causes of women's inadequate entitlement as deep-rooted inequalities in control over resources and their lack of voice in the struggle for resource allocation. The majority of the data for this study was gathered from opinions from other social science researchers that applied either/or a combination of inductive and deductive approaches. By using these multiple sources the study involved strategies of multiple triangulation. Triangulation is the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomena (Denzin, 1978). According to Denzin (1978: 304), triangulation exists when researchers combine in one investigation multiple observers, theoretical perspectives, sources of data, and methodologies. Thus, this study triangulated data sources, methods, and theory, to search for recurrent themes from the literature.

3.1 Data Description

During the 1970s and 1980s, anthropologists and ecologists sought to understand how pastoralists responded to drought and environmental changes, and these foci dominated the pastoralist research (Fratkin, 1997) done in Africa and the Middle East (overviewed by Barfield, 1993; Dyson-Hudson & Dyson-Hudson, 1980). The 1970s and 1980s were also a period of large-scale development efforts by international donor communities, whose policies were driven by the "tragedy of the commons" thesis. Thus, development projects during this time emphasized privatization of rangelands, commercial ranching, and sedentarization of nomads, particularly in Africa. As a result the literature on pastoralism has become large and continues to grow (Fratkin, 1997). A significant number of the literature sources focused on political and economic change, including the loss of communal grazing lands, sedentarization and urban migration, and rapid commoditization in a market economy. The publication of Nomads and the outside World, by Khazanov (1994) provided a remarkable synthesis and analysis of pastoralist history and ethnographies he conducted on pastoralists in many locations of the world. Increased drought and famine during the 1970s and early 1980s, particularly in West and East Africa, led to major discussions about the future of pastoralism (E'quippe E'cologie, 1979; Galaty & Bonte 1991; Galaty et. al., 1981; Galaty & Johnson, 1990; Fabietti & Salzman, 1996; Salzman, 1980; Swift, 1977). Increased efforts by multilateral and bilateral assistance organizations (for example United Nations, World Bank, United States Agency for International Development) and the implementation of programs in arid lands have led to a large literature on pastoral development as well. Other works,

particularly by cultural anthropologists, have described the effects, often negative, of development efforts on pastoralist women (Baxter & Hogg 1990; Dahl 1987; Ensminger 1987; Fratkin & Smith 1995; Horowitz & Jowka 1992; Little 1987, 1994a; Talle 1988; Oxy 1975; Sanford 1983).

3.2 Strengths and limitations of documentary research

3.2.1 Strengths

Documents made it possible for me to conduct the study to capture findings across space and time. By searching a wide range of literature many direct and proximate causes of food insecurity have been identified, in particular the influence of gender inequality. Major advantages of documentary research are its low cost of data collection, time efficiency in data analysis, and the benefit of synthesizing a large body of research.

3.2.2 Limitations

There were numerous challenges and delays to locate and obtain government records and reports from Kenya. In most cases I had to wait for weeks before receiving the materials, hence locating the sources was time consuming. Often missing too in secondary analysis is the complete explanation of the conditions under which the raw data were collected. As such, I had no control over the definitions of important terms used in classification, and quality of the data. Furthermore, the original authors' corrections in addition to my own interpretations can create a gap between the original observation and my text. Moreover, the researcher cannot observe the situations in which these materials were written or how they were made available for different audiences. Under such circumstances, the researcher must trust the original sources without being

able to check their veracity. One way to offset this limitation is to obtain as exhaustive a set of documents as possible to cross-check the interpretations of the data and find consistencies and inconsistencies.

3.3 Trustworthiness

Several researchers have written about issues of rigor (reliability and validity) as they relate to qualitative inquiry (Kirk & Miller, 1986; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A model of evaluating rigor in qualitative research is the assessment of trustworthiness or "how a researcher can persuade his audience that the research findings are worthy of attention" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985: 290). Criteria for establishing the trustworthiness of findings include the requirements for reliability and validity. Reliability refers to the probability that an observation, if repeated at a different time by the same person or at the same time by another observer, will give the same result (Gall & Borg 1996:251; Mhina 1998: 52). Reliability suggests a degree of dependability or consistency within the data; repeatability of observations should recur under identical or very similar conditions (Neuman, 2000). Essentially, in documentary analysis, the researcher must convince the reader that she has critically examined the literature available and defend her final observations and arguments well with that available evidence.

Validity on the other hand in qualitative research means truthfulness. Validity is described as the correctness or credibility of a description, explanation or interpretation from findings (Kirk and Miller, 1986; Maxwell, 1996). The credibility of qualitative inquiry is especially dependent on the credibility of the researchers since she is the instrument of data collection and the centre of the analytic process. The central question

would be whether the knowledge produced is worthwhile. To confirm whether the findings are trustworthy, I gathered data from a comparison of results from different locations and times, and different authors. Because of the risks of error and the danger of unknown biases inherent in my method of study, I have stressed the importance of careful data sampling. Sampling adequacy, evidenced by saturation and replication, refers to sufficient data to account for all aspects of the phenomenon that have been obtained.

By moving back and forth between data collection and analysis, I systematically checked data for reliability and validity. To ensure reliability and validity, processes of peer review were also engaged in this study, where a colleague shares extended and extensive discussions of one's findings, conclusions, and tentative analyses (Mayan, 2001). Peer review ensures reliability as it allows another researcher to examine the data in order to arrive at the same or comparable conclusions. I gave the drafts of my report to colleagues for critique and for alternative interpretation. I did member checks by soliciting comments from the Somali people in Edmonton to rule out the possibility of misinterpretation of the meaning of what the authors said. Generally, when multiple data sources are employed, reliability checks can be made.

As a native from the area of interest, and raised as a nomad, I wanted to use a method for my study that gave me insights on alternative approaches to address poverty in my region. In view of that, I did not like the idea of getting information solely from written material per se. Interestingly, contrary to my worries that I might not access adequate information, I ended up with a wealth of information to summarise most commonly identified causes of poverty in the northern Kenya.

The following section establishes the main argument of this study that addresses the structural causes of food insecurity in NEP. In a broad sense, the section highlights the patriarchal continuity and other causes of food shortages in this region. This study, which embraces an entitlement and capability approach, recognizes the nature of pastoral women's subordinate status in the Somali society, socially, economically and politically. The main objective of this approach is, therefore, to uncover the specificities of women's lack of entitlements as a basis for exploring possible avenues to bring fundamental improvements to their lives. Against this background, the study sets out to examine in detail the gender dimensions of food security among pastoral Somalis in Northeastern Kenya. The section that follows is devoted to theoretical considerations of the limiting factors to entitlements in NEP pastoral systems.

3.4 Structural Causes of Food Insecurity in NEP

Although in the past NEP pastoralists have been able to sustain themselves on livestock production that has been largely extensive rather than intensive, this herding strategy has become much more difficult. Research scientists perceive that the major constraints in food security in arid and semi-arid lands (ASAL) areas of Kenya appear to be: population growth and influx, climate conditions (rainfall intensity and distribution and risk of flooding), conflicts and insecurity that result from a scramble for scarce rangeland resources, and life-style, which is characterized by the historical high rates of migration of pastoral nomads. The order of the above listed sequence below does not reflect their rank in importance, but where the negative factors accumulate the households are generally even more vulnerable and can be classified as food insecure.

Generally, inhabitants of remote rural areas, in particular, pastoral communities, often endure a set of common vulnerabilities and risks. The negative accumulation of the above mentioned factors, combined with infrastructural and social remoteness, particularly from markets, health centres and the lack of political-decision making has led to pastoralists' inadequate entitlements. Inadequate entitlements based on Sen's and Chambers's work are linked to a lack of capabilities where people do not have adequate means to satisfy their basic food requirements (Chambers, 1994, 1997). The section below will draw links between entitlements and capabilities for Somali pastoralists.

3.4.1 Institutional Policy Bias

People who have settled in the wet or dry season areas have been issued title deeds, whereas the rangelands in the north are held in-trust by the State rather than by the pastoralists. A Title deed entitles the holder to legally claim the land. Local herdsmen do not have a clearly defined legal claim on "In-trust" land that belongs to the government. In such circumstances, the government can appropriate land for its own use at will at the expense of pastoral nomads. Examples of such cases are the Bura and Hola irrigation schemes and annexation of the Marsabit forest and National Parks. The displacement of nomadic pastoralists from their prime dry season grazing areas is increasing and the effects of such changes are limiting pastoralists' territory. This reduction of free range area has resulted in overuse of certain range areas, reduction in productivity as a result of accelerated desertification, aggravation of tensions among herdsmen, and conflict between herdsmen and farmers, which often results in violence and loss of life (Little, 1987). For example, to the northwest of the province, there is occasional friction between

Turkana, Samburu, and Rendille herdsmen over access to grazing land. Similarly, there are disputes between the Somalis and neighbouring tribes, such as the Boran, and within the province, disputes among the Somali clans over land use rights. These disputes have often led to bloody raids by one community against another and subsequent retaliation by the victims of the attack.

Conflicts and food insecurity are inextricably linked, each triggering and reinforcing the other. Conflict itself almost always intensifies hunger, as it drives people from their homes and disrupts marketing and distribution systems. Communities who have been torn apart by conflict have little confidence in the future, and are reluctant to invest in agricultural improvements. Moreover, where governments continue to squander scarce resources on military arms, donors are discouraged and reluctant to invest in these areas. From my view it appears that the Kenyan government's lack of attention to conflict in this region contributes to pervasive insecurity. It should be noted that in Kenya there is an overt emphasis by state agents to react to conflict with military action instead of diplomatic conflict resolution efforts that empowers communities to work through regional conflicts. In this regard, the past record of conflict resolution for pastoralists in Kenya is poor, and no optimistic changes have since occured.

3.4.2 Drought and Climatic Limitations

The northern Kenya arid rangelands suffer from periodic droughts, which have appeared to occur more frequently in recent times. Drought is a natural feature of arid areas, and is defined as a condition of unexpectedly low rainfall. The impact of drought is far more severe than it was formally and may be due to the increase in both human and

livestock population, and global climate change. Drought claims the lives of large numbers of livestock and wildlife. The resilience of rangeland production systems to recover from drought seems to be declining with each drought. This phenomenon is evident from the number of destitute families that increases after each drought. Destitute families are those who lose all of their livestock, or have too few animals to support their nomadic families. These families become reliant upon famine relief. Provision of famine relief has become a permanent feature of the economy of NEP (District Development Reports 1969 to 1997). Faced with this unstable environment, the pastoralists of this region have developed specific coping strategies. Examples of these traditional drought mitigations include: growing and storing of millet and sorghum in traditional silos before a drought (pre-emptive response to drought), and migrating to new pastures in the event of a drought (reactive response to drought). Nevertheless, even the best coping mechanisms can be overwhelmed by an extended drought.

3.4.3 Population Pressure and Influx

Food security in the pastoral population is highly related to the relatively low productivity of the arid lands of Kenya and population pressure. The arid land human population has doubled in the last 25 years and is expected to double again in the next ten years (District Development Report 1999). Pastoral population growth is reinforced by the influx of surplus population pressure out of the high potential areas for agricultural productivity. The rising human population has resulted in increased demand upon rangeland resources.

Particularly significant is the additional requirement of plant twigs for building and for fuel, which leads to clear-cuts of large tracts of woody vegetation. Pastoral people in northern Kenya use large quantities of woody material for construction of night enclosures (corrals). These corrals keep animals together at night and prevent loss by predation and livestock theft. Corrals are built at both permanent and temporary camps (IPAL UNESCO Technical Report No. A-6 1984). Permanent corrals are occupied for longer time periods than the temporary ones (satellite camps), but still require periodic replacement to avoid the accumulation of ticks and parasites. Before pastoralists move, the old enclosure is burned down, so new material is required to construct a new corral. Corral construction has a great impact on the woody vegetation because a shrub in the arid area takes a longer time to grow and recruitment of new seedlings is low compared to more fertile and productive areas.

The settlement pattern of human population also contributes to the deterioration of rangelands in the arid north. The traditional practice of the pastoral nomads was to disperse during the wet season from dry season grazing areas. The dry season grazing areas have historically had permanent watering points that remained green when all other areas were almost devoid of vegetation. Today, there is an increase in sedentarization of formerly nomadic people on these more productive lands. From my observation, humans and livestock in this region are now tending to concentrate around springs, wells, and boreholes. Mulinge (1995) furthers this observation noting that concentrations are followed by shops, schools, medical centres, and famine relief programs. The former

oasis has become a nucleus of overgrazed and overused land, which spreads in widening circles of human-made deserts.

The pastoral economy is complex and has developed over the years to protect pastoralists from adverse effects of weather and other natural hazards, like diseases. It is increasingly becoming apparent that the traditional pastoral socio-economic institutions cannot sustain pastoralists under the new environmental, social-economic, and cultural conditions. Under-development symptoms such as severe hunger, poverty and human misery have been prevalent among these pastoralists, which is why food availability is of much greater concern in this area.

Northern Kenya has been largely neglected by the government and development agencies, especially Somali pastoralists, who have settled less than other Kenyan pastoralists. The lack of adequate policies that focus on livestock development as an economic opportunity has resulted in limited representation of livestock interests in decision-making bodies and policy formulation circles for pastoralists. Pastoralists' concerns are almost always left unaddressed. For example, marketing systems are less developed and relief distribution has been less widespread among these people (Galaty et. al., 1980).

As an indication of the detachment of the northerners from main stream Kenyans, northern Kenyans refer to the others in the country as those from "down Kenya" (mainstream Kenyans). Conversely, the Somalis have been given official group names that connote second class status in their national society. Due to the bandit activity in this region non-pastoral Kenyans hold resilient prejudices about northern pastoralists and

refer to them as "cattle rustlers" and "tribal raiders" (Kenya Nation, June 16, 2002). Challenging their national status and elevating their national common bonds with others in the country, this group of people have recently redefined themselves as Kenyan Somalis.

Pastoral Somali women in Kenya are alienated because of the combined impacts of droughts, biased policies, and oppressive cultural practices. Since the focus of this study is mainly on pastoral women's subordination with an implication of food insecurity, I shall now concentrate on the oppressive cultural practices, which will be covered in the following section.

3.5 Patriarchy and Culture

3.5.1 Cultural Devaluation of Women

Somali 'culture' plays a significant role in defining how men dominate women (see figure 2: the theoretical framework). In this study, I shall consider culture to be the integrated pattern of human behaviour that includes thoughts, communication, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and understanding of ethnic, religious or social groups. In the culture of the Somali tribe the roots of inequalities, according to Keynan (1995), are in patriarchal traditions that confine women to house keeping, procreation, and community chores. Their confinement to domestic responsibilities excludes them from positions of power and influence, and denies them access to resources. Their confinement imposes severe restrictions on women's intellectual and social development and stifles their

creative skills and energy. It also discourages them from openly expressing their thoughts and feelings.

Somali culture has established elaborate myths and traditional discourses including folk tales and popular proverbs to rationalize and sanctify patriarchy. Poetry, according to Samatar, a history professor in Rutgers University, is a powerful component of Somali culture, and remains highly esteemed. Traditionally, almost every significant event in Somali life was composed in verse: marriage, separation, a mother's advice to her daughter about whom to marry, even a petition to God. Poems incited wars and helped end them. It is in oral literature that men's campaign against women begins. Enormously popular folk tales portray women as inherently incapable of being rational rulers and decent wives (Keynan, 1995). Proverbs convey the message that womanhood or motherhood is incompatible with intelligence and wisdom. "A breast that contains milk cannot contain wisdom", says a well-known proverb. Poetry portrays women as incapable of rhyming one word with another and therefore as unworthy of having a meaningful voice. The ideal woman is the silent woman whose words and ideas are limited to her immediate circle of children and other women.

In my analysis, these Somali proverbs define women as soft and weak, submissive and compliant. It is a woman's duty to be an obedient wife to her husband and to socialize other women to the same. Women's roles reflect and simultaneously construct Somali collective consciousness regarding what each gender is entitled to. It is through this discourse that mothers come to believe their daughters do not "need" as much food

or as good education as their sons. It is also through these discourses that daughters come to accept their shares as fair and just.

Examining the effects of culturally patterned behaviour provides important insights into women's status. Institutionalized cultural norms have allocated women a position subordinate to men in a number of areas. In the allocation of and implementation of power, it is men who clearly dominate the patrilineal, polygamous kinship structure that generally characterises the nomadic northern tribes. The traditional family unit is an authoritarian structure in which husbands and fathers tend to be 'little kings'. Ideally women are supposed to show deference to men unless, because of immaturity or some serious defect, such men are regarded as inferior. The head of a household is seen as a man, honoured by deference and family privileges. For example, the wife is expected to cook and serve food for her husband and his family members but is forbidden to join them. At social gatherings men sit on clean mats while women and children are expected to sit on the ground. Men control the wealth and power of the society; hence, livestock is owned by them and can be inherited only by them. Generally, rural women in Kenya may have user rights, but they cannot hold legal ownership of land and livestock (Wipper, 1995).

The Somali social organization is based on kinship, rank and sex. The rank structure divides the people into two groups: the elders and the commoners. The men elders have authority over all members of the village and are entitled to special privileges and tokens of respect. Seniority, which is based on age and sex, orders social interaction

among individuals. Within the family, the senior male member has authority over all members, males over females, and the older over the younger.

From my eight years of work in this region, I have observed the customs that contribute to gender inequalities. Girls are subject first to their father's or their brother's authority. When girls and women marry, they are subordinate to their husbands. Arranged marriages are the norm, which are contracted several years before the girl reaches puberty. The bride and groom usually do not see each other before their wedding night, which is normally conducted during the rainy season. Parents may decide that their daughter is ready to marry and have selected a groom with no discussions with their daughter about her potential mate. The parents could plan the wedding rituals as soon as one day before the wedding. Because the wedding plan shocks many new brides, it is not uncommon for brides to run away on their wedding night. Interestingly, the wedding plan is not withheld from males and adolescent boys discuss marriage matters freely amongst themselves and with their parents.

Early marriage, which is a reflection of the low status of women and their low educational attainment, is also a social custom. The average age at which girls marry is between 14-16 years. According to the Muslim code of religious law girls should be wedded at puberty, which can have its onset quite early. An unmarried daughter who is beyond puberty is felt to be an embarrassment to the family. Since their economic value is perceived as low, girls are considered a burden on the parental home. At the same time, strict norms of behaviour keep girls from taking up income-earning work. As a rule the father or another male guardian arranges the marriage. From my observation, most girls

in this community are married to men who are considerably older than them and owing to the age difference among married couples, women run a high risk of being widowed with the consequent danger of being impoverished. The age difference averaging seven years at present also confers an additional aura of marital authority on the husbands. In her husband's family, the wife is subordinate to all the other members of the household, older females included. Her only path to social recognition is through motherhood. Male progeny are preferred because, among other reasons, they inherit and it is their duty to provide for the elderly. The following information offers some indication of the gender gap in livestock ownership among the Somali pastoralists in Northern Kenya.

3.5.2 Legal Status of Women and Rules of Inheritance

Over and above the constitution in Kenya stands the patriarchal interpretation of the Kenyan law and the Muslim religion, which makes implementing egalitarian legislation extremely problematic. Under the constitution, both sexes have the same rights and are entitled to equal treatment under the law. This legally equal status does not confer to gender status in the public sphere. Illiteracy, a feeble social and political awareness, and the duty to adhere to religious and cultural norms, act to keep women from taking part in public life. In Kenyan family matters such as marriage, divorce, guardianship for children and rights of inheritance are guided by religious laws, which discriminate quite clearly against women. Under the Islamic law of inheritance for example, widows receive but a trifling portion of their husband's property, particularly if there are no children or "only" daughters. In the absence of a son as a male heir, most of the property passes to male relatives of the deceased. This law gives women another

strong motivation to bear many children. The unilateral laws governing polygamy and divorce further show discrimination against women. Whereas a man can reject his wife without a civil divorce, a woman must go through a long drawn-out court proceeding.

With regards to the cultural rules of inheritance, Somali pastoral nomads place substantial importance on livestock ownership and equate it to wealth. Wealth from their cultural viewpoint is where men and boys are able to ensure continuity of the family's prestige through acquiring livestock, especially camels which are deemed more valuable than other livestock. According to Lewis (1961), a man has primary and absolute rights of ownership, and these rights are applied to all possessions, especially camels, sheep and goats. It is especially in camels that blood-wealth is transferred. Even the value of a person's life is translated into a certain number of camels. From an Islamic viewpoint, a man's life is normally valued at a hundred camels and a woman's life at fifty. Sometimes women come to own sheep and goats but it is exceedingly rare for a woman to possess full rights of ownership of camels. Indeed it is so rare that in special circumstances, when this happens, it is a topic of widespread conversation and comment.

During his life a male youth inherits rights of his father's herd. Ideally at birth, his father gives him a camel-calf called his 'navel-knot'. As the son grows into manhood he receives occasional gifts of camels from his father and elder brothers. At marriage the son's rights are usually formalised and a portion of the family's herd's allotted to him as bride-wealth.

Another dimension of Somali pastoral women's subordination that is often overlooked by existing reports and accounting systems is their work intensity.

Housework secludes women and makes their efforts and the value of their work less visible. In the following section, I will briefly discuss the inherent exploitative nature of women's labour within the Somali pastoral cultural sphere.

3.5.3 Household Distribution of Tasks

Generally, women in pastoral society do a lot of work. Among the Somali tribe, the division of labour is clearly defined and heavily weighted towards women. As I explained earlier, Somali women traditionally take on all household activities such as milking the animals, processing milk and meat for preservation purposes, and selling milk in the markets. Field (2000) reports that traditional methods exist, mainly among the Boran and Somali pastoralists, for the preservation of milk for longer periods. These traditional methods are labour-intensive. Milk will be specially prepared for the husband when he returns from a long journey and serve as an indication of the wife's concern for his welfare during his absence. The same report has indicated that through traditional methods, pastoral women preserve meat as well. For example, when a daughter prepares to marry, the mother of the pastoral bride will preserve meat for her to take to her new home. In addition, in small quantities, pastoral women also preserve nyirinyiri or small pieces of boneless steak, mostly from camel, which is fried in and stored in fat for their husbands to eat when they come back from a journey.

In addition, children are carried by the mother most of the time, and nursed instantly on demand, taking much of their mother's attention. Although the number of children is generally lower among pastoralists than among sedentary people, many pastoral women spend a large part of their life between 14 and 45 years of age with a

baby either in their womb or on their back. In sum, the responsibilities and requirements of a mother often drains her energy and makes it difficult for her to arrange domestic activities in a flexible way in terms of both time and space.

Normally the dry season is a period of frequent moves, involving a great deal of work for women such as packing, loading, transporting and building of nomadic aqal (hut made of grass). Each married woman moves with the hut and all its effects when moving from place to place. The loading and unloading of the camel, and erection and dismantling of the nomadic hut with its curved wooden supports and grass and skin coverings, are women's work. In these tasks, a wife is assisted by her daughters.

The management of the sheep and goats, which a husband allots to his wife for the family's sustenance, is largely in her hands. A married woman is assisted by unmarried daughters still living at home and sons too young to be out with the grazing camels. Caring for sheep and goats are essentially women's work and men often show disinterest in the numbers and health of these livestock, even though these livestock are men's property over which they have primary rights of possessions and disposal. Meanwhile, unmarried men have the formidable job to scout out the next area to which they move, and arrange for additional transport from other families.

Usually camels of close kinsmen are herded together while the stock herd of brothers, cousins, fathers and sons are managed communally by a group of youths and penned at night within a common kraal. The grazing camels herded in the camel-camps are under the charge of camels-boys, i.e., the young boys of the migrating families ranging in age from about seven to 20 years. Men also attend to watering and sometimes

grazing of the camels but even this ceases as soon as the family's first son is able to look after the camels.

The culturally deep-rooted biases against females, seen in the unequal allocation of resources, combined with the lack of other entitlements necessary for survival, limit pastoral women's overall productivity in food production. The following section further discusses the division of labour among women, and the human welfare implications of gendered work.

3.6 The Gender Implications of Food Insecurity

3.6.1 Time Use by Women

The patronizing attitude of male powers who view women as needy dependents is reflected in the assumption that males should control and exploit women's labour power. Pastoral Somali women work numerous shifts per day. Waking up before 4 am, they light fires, milk the animals, clean the surroundings, and feed the family. In the early evening they forage for branches of twigs to fuel their fires, and grass for the young animals. At the same time women look for the camel bulls to bring them back to camp for the evening. As they tend to these tasks, they harvest bark fibre and grass, which they make into ropes and grass huts. Finally, women return home to do evening chores.

During the evening they weave the grass into mats before they sleep. During the dry season, before the animals are milked in the evening, the animals are let out to browse close to the hamlet under watchful eyes of mothers and girls, and occasionally small boys, while the men go to sleep. At dusk, the flocks are led into the pens, counted

and then milked by the women. For all their efforts they do not own the animals on which they labour every year. They find themselves poorer and less able to provide what their families need to survive.

Women's importance as household sustainers has increased with the death, or loss of activity, of many men since drought events have increased. When food scarcity and cash needs force pastoral households to send members away to look for wages, those who leave are young adult men, whose work traditionally was vital to the mobility of livestock. The presence of drought also encourages parents to send their children to school to take advantage of school feeding programs. Due to the emerging labour shortages, women and young girls are increasingly drawn into male tasks such as moving with the livestock and watering the livestock. In the long run, impoverishment and lowered productivity from reduced access to family labourers has consequences for the workload of women and their children. Their heavy burdens are similar to and intertwined with the effects of drought. For example, the proportion of sick animals, which have to be looked after in the corral, tend to rise during drought periods. At the same time women have to increasingly traverse greater distances to find fodder, and it has become more laborious to provide water to the animals and people at of their camps (Schwartz, 1985).

Women also play a significant role in other income-generating activities for household food production. In more recent years, they have appeared to migrate more in search of employment, although their responsibilities for childcare and disadvantaged members of the household tend to inhibit their mobility.

In periods of economic or climatic stress, women assist in male chores after prioritizing their own chores. For example, women may postpone mat making. When women carry the main responsibility for herding, migrations for pastures are slowed down because of the difficulties women have when they combine herding with domestic tasks, and because of men's reluctance to let women herd livestock at distant pastures. The tasks that women take over in a crisis are usually those that involve "manual labour" of herding, rather than planning and decision-making. Time allocation for tasks shifts under conditions of seasonal drought and economic hardships, especially in regards to food preparation. Pastoralists' emphasis on the collection of milk provides less time for the preparation of daily meals. When corn grain dependency increases, much more time is spent at the fireside cooking maize, and thus to collect fuel wood as well. For the pastoral woman time may become a very scarce resource due to the increased demands that are put on her labour. The opportunities to choose for herself which tasks to carry out, in what order, are likely to be a dilemma.

Time use is associated with women's age. Women over 50 years of age are more likely to have leisure time than those aged 25 to 50. It is important to note that women of all age groups need moments of rest, which they can eventually use to generate energy to put toward income earning activities (Dahl, 1985; Ensminger, 1983), and to help with other chores more central to household sustenance, such as fetching water and firewood, and marketing milk.

3.6.2 Nutritional and Health Status of the Somali Pastoral Women

The 1994 Welfare Monitoring Survey conducted in Kenya indicated significant nutritional deficiencies in NEP (see WMS Report, 1994). The survey findings indicated that there is acute widespread malnutrition (verging on starvation) among those women, and chronic malnutrition (Protein Energy Malnutrition-PEM) of children (as measured by correlating their weight to their age; this is even more widespread). Nutritional circumstances often appear to be worse in dry seasons. The WMS report above mentions that there is strong tradition of breast-feeding practices among this community, but the amount of milk women produce is lowered due to the stress of burdensome labour conditions. The inherent weakness of infant feeding patterns leads to less attentive childcare.

Malnutrition is particularly prevalent among children under five, women, internally displaced people and inhabitants of peri-urban areas. Deficiencies of vitamin A and iron, and anaemia are more prevalent in lactating mothers, followed by pregnant women and those of reproductive age. A series of regional studies conducted by UNICEF (1992, 1993, 1997) indicated that 80% of pastoral pregnant women in NEP have anaemia deficiencies. Iodine deficiency appears fairly widespread, contributing to a high incidence of night blindness, anaemia and goitre. The same studies further point out that traditional attitudes towards certain foods have inhibited appropriate dietary patterns, where the diet mix is often inadequately balanced. Fruits and vegetables would clearly be beneficial, but generally, there are problems of ignorance in relation to food quality. A general lack of nutritional knowledge due to lack of literacy, particularly among mothers, contributes to

malnutrition. Pastoral families cannot take full advantage of the fruits and vegetables that are available in town markets due to their high mobility lifestyle.

Many of the health problems that affect women have their roots in girlhoods. Due to son preference, girls suffer not only nutritional neglect but also receive less attention during sickness than boys. Preferential food allocation to males exacerbates malnutrition among females, who eat last and least throughout their lives. Even in their productive years, women appear to receive less from the family pot, consequently, women weigh less than the standard of 50 kilograms and most of them die below 45 years of age, which is considerably below the average expectancy age of a Kenyan women at 65 (AMREF 1996; UNICEF Report, 1997). The prevalence of infection and parasitic diseases in poor communities compounds the problem.

When a woman is pregnant, no special concessions are made regarding the pregnant woman's work role. She continues to work as normal. She receives no nutritional supplement and because she has the lowest status in the household, she is served food last. From an Islamic viewpoint, it is not required that a pregnant women observe fast, but because she has to pay back the lost days, from my observation, a Somali woman would generally prefer to fast with everyone else during the conventional month. Upon delivery, no special food is given to the mother to restore her strength and to enhance lactation. Limited dietary supplements, and no adjustments to her work role are made. In general, mothers with newborns and young children are given no extra consideration, which often drains women's strength, and illustrates the cultural

devaluation of women. The seclusion of women results from many fronts, of greatest importance is lack of education.

3.6.3 Education

In a 'pure pastoral nomadic setting' cultural values and norms contribute to the low state of female education. Many parents influenced by cultural norms lack interest or are openly hostile to the formal education of their daughters. The opinion is still quite widespread that education spoils a girl's character and undermines her willingness to fulfill her traditional role. Early marriage and the importance of preserving a girl's good reputation leads to widespread withdrawal of girls from school at puberty, especially if they attend co-educational institutions.

According to AbdiNoor et al. (1999) a Somali pastoral family may see no future economic benefit in educating their girls since they are being prepared for another family, and on marriage, will cease to contribute to the parents' household economy. While there may be differences in the role and status of women in the Somali community, women are generally viewed as custodians of cultural values. This means that girls get prepared to assume the role of respectable housewives. There is, therefore, a greater likelihood of reluctance on the part of nomadic pastoralists to send their girls to school, especially if the girls have to travel outside their communities. School can represent a distraction from learning household skills and expose girls to outside influences of which the parents do not approve.

Educational circumstances in peri-urban areas are a bit different than in the rural areas. Due to urban proximity, sedentary pastoral households are in a better position to

understand the importance of investment in human capital, such as education, to enhance labour productivity, and thereby contribute to economic growth and development. In the same empirical study, AbdiNoor indicates that there is a greater likelihood that sedentary pastoral households send their daughters to school, which could be explained within the context of role modelling and opportunity for non-pastoral livelihoods. An educated woman from the community is more likely to be working and to have some degree of financial independence. She therefore may become a source of inspiration to other girls in the community. Coupled with this is the easy access to transportation and more open society, which provides impetus for increased school enrolment of girls from sedentary pastoral households. As impressive as this may appear to be, it must be noted that some sedentary parents still do not approve of their girls' higher education. Unlike nomadic pastoral households, sedentary societies are not homogenous, hence, parents fear that girls will mix more with boys from different backgrounds, thus exposing the girls to inappropriate influences. This protectionism may bar the girls from educational experiences, thus diminishing various life chances for girls' eventual financial independence.

Generally, pastoral nomads view formal schooling as a competitive activity with pastoralism. Whereas education is an investment for the future, it causes an enormous labour drain in the pastoral sector. Most pastoralists who complete primary education leave the pastoral economy (Adawa, 1986). This results in serious depletion of the main pastoral labour force (the young men) and adversely affects levels of household food productivity. Many of the traditional adaptive strategies, such as migrating to new

pastures, becomes difficult if not impossible if children must be in school. Education is a long-time investment into a child's future, and in the herders' viewpoint competes against the immediate benefits of child labour from herding.

3.6.4 Peri- Urban Migration and its Consequences

Paul Baxter (1994) concluded that most attempts to develop or improve traditional pastoralism have failed and that pastoralists are becoming poorer. In his view, development interventions continue to aim at sedentarizing pastoralists, controlling their movements through grazing blocks, and steering their integration into the commercial economy to supply cheap meat to the cities. Baxter and other researchers argue that such sedentarization ultimately affects the productivity of the pastures, leading to the spread of overgrazing and an extension of drought-like conditions (AbdiNoor 1999; Baxter 1994; Dahl 1987). However, in the absence of any development intervention, NEP would face increasing food deficits. These deficits, in turn, would lead to the out-migration of young men (leading to key labour shortages). Those who migrate are likely to become part of the population of the peri-urban poor who live near towns and resort to informal employment or farm wage labour (Baxter 1985).

Other case studies done in northern Kenya have reported negative social-economic consequences of pastoral involuntary resettlements, including poorer nutrition, inadequate housing, and lack of clean drinking water (Fraklin 1997; Nathan et al. 1996). These case studies in Kenya reveal that settled Rendille children were three times more likely to be malnourished than nomadic ones, which the authors attributed to greater access to camel's milk by nomadic communities. The same studies observed that settled

populations have higher rates of malaria, anemia, and intestinal parasites. Furthermore, several social science studies are currently pointing to increased AIDS among settled Barabaig and Masaai pastoralists of Kenya (Klepp et al 1994).

A number of studies report positive and negative consequences, particularly for pastoral women who settle in peri-urban areas. Some scholars have found that urbanization may offer new opportunities for poor pastoralist women as maids and cooks, as sellers of locally made charcoal, or, sadly, as beggars (Dahl 1987, Talle 1987, 1988; Hogg, 2001). When women settle in or near towns they have some new opportunities, however, household poverty may prevent them from exploiting these opportunities, simply because they do not have adequate time. In fact, these peri-urban areas are subject to environmental degradation. Women may adopt unsustainable environmental activities such as cutting down trees for firewood, charcoal, fence construction, and shelter, and this then contributes to the localized degradation of the natural resource base (Baxter, 1994; Keya, 1998; McPeak 2000; Scwartz et al. 1991; Saito et al 1994).

Furthermore, the inadvertent consequences of structural adjustment programs (SAPs) [2] and economic or trade liberalization policies in the developing countries are no longer an enigma. The adoption of these policies in Kenya has created further hardship for many households because such policies have resulted in reduced per capita public

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[2] SAPs consist of a comprehensive set of policies imposed by the IMF and World Bank on debtor nations who agree to implement them as a condition for receiving new loans or debt relief. These policies reflect the neo-liberal approach to development, known, as the "Washington Consensus" that is rooted in the belief that unfettered free markets will promote economic growth resulting in development. This approach embraces free trade, deregulating capital markets, privatization, and a greater reduced role for government and public policy (Gladwin, 1992).

expenditures on health and education (Gladwin, 1992). Remittances from informal employment or wage labour may not be enough to satisfy the needs of the household members and survival skills may be inadequate for pastoral people in their new settings. The Somali tribe, like other African societies, have traditionally survived on social support systems and community responsiveness based on the extended family structure. Economic austerities and the struggle for survival have made worse these culturally relevant, traditional and practical support structures, resulting in extended family withdrawal of, or limited support to, network members. As a result, many peri-urban households are increasingly finding it difficult to maintain adequate levels of domestic consumption and secure general welfare. Given the lack of public assistance, their poverty becomes acute.

Limited opportunities for alternative sources of livelihood, especially for men, exacerbate the above problem in NEP. No processing industries exist in NEP. Further, the distinct language of the region makes it difficult for Somalis to integrate with other communities living in the more-developed towns of Kenya, i.e., where local people might partner in business with urban capitalists. Everyone in Kenya is expected to know Swahili; NEP language deficiencies limit the Somali tribe's opportunities when they move to other parts of the country.

The irrigation intervention along the Tana and Daua of 1980s and 1990s was ostensibly developed to improve pastoralists' sources of livelihood, but has had negative effects, especially on women and children (Baxter, 1994; Farah and Haji, 1990; Hogg, 1986). The reason for the poor performance may be due to poor irrigation planning and

management and lack of farmers' commitment to sedentary farming. Inappropriate methods of irrigation farming, distance of schemes from settlement areas, and a suite of socio-cultural and technological barriers have also led to the lack of men and women's involvement in crop farming. Not surprisingly then, the agricultural productivity and overall output from these small-scale irrigation schemes in NEP has been very low.

This unviable farming system as an option has rendered many men jobless, with most of them resorting to idle pursuit, playing traditional games under acacia trees, and chewing miraa[3] (Cathula edulis, a mild narcotic). In situations where women struggle day-in day-out for the family's livelihood, miraa expenses may pose more financial difficulties to all household members. Miraa use appears to be a significant social problem in the province. This is so for several reasons. First, miraa consumption constitutes a serious drain of hard currency as it is produced out of the province. Second, at the household level, it diverts scarce funds away from needed food, medicine and savings. Third, because chewing sessions normally begin at mid-day, it reduces the length of the working day to roughly half a day, contributing to reduced household food productivity. In Kenya, many Somalis who are long-haul transport drivers chew miraa to stay awake on long trips. Miraa is also used recreationally.

Since the motivation underlying the approach of "entitlement" as contributing to strengthening "capabilities", what would be damaging would be the neglect of these crucially important "subjects". The following section therefore, offers some possible

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[3] Miraa is a leafy plant grown in the highlands of Kenya and Ethiopia. The plant properties contain an addictive substance consumed widely by the Somali community in Kenya as a social past-time drug.

answers to food threats and provides suggestions for alternative survival strategies for pastoralists and their families, especially in times of drought and famine.

4.0 Mechanisms to Improve Food Insecurity in NEP

4.1 Strategies for Coping with the Drought and its Mitigation

A policy to improve pastoral food security needs specific measures of drought and famine contingency planning. Drought contingency planning involves instituting appropriate measures to cushion pastoralists against the disastrous effects of drought and famine. Since drought will remain an important feature of pastoral areas, its effects can be anticipated and contained by ensuring food availability and protecting pastoral entitlements, such as provisions of security, basic public services, and better political representation of pastoralists on policy-making bodies. Key elements of drought contingency planning include: early warning systems that provide indicators of impending food crisis; food security safety nets (especially for food storage and food preservation), and assisted destocking and restocking of ruminants. Post-drought reconstruction (service provision) is another component of drought contingency planning and involves appropriate rehabilitation activities at the end of the drought crises.

Development agencies could assist with the preparation of drought contingency plans by evaluating past experience in the field and supporting seminars and training for government officials and pastoralists to prepare and implement drought contingency plans. It is important to note that the effects of drought are locally specific and responses to food security must be appropriately differentiated. When attempting to tackle some of the challenges posed by drought to dry land communities, it is important to consider that rigid policies do not allow for changing circumstances. Key decisions over development

interventions and land-use planning policies, for example, should be made at a local level, and revised as frequently as is appropriate. Such policies will most likely reflect local realities and will be more readily accepted if all stakeholders are involved.

Drought mitigation strategies used by pastoralists have been suggested for depending on the intensities of drought. Drought is either avoided by moving else where, or under certain circumstances, dealt with by disposing of livestock and turning temporarily to other sources of subsistence. In principle, drought resilience could be gained by switching to more drought-tolerant breeds as the risk or intensity of the drought increases. Unfortunately, this degree of flexibility is seldom practical. In rare cases, pastoralists change the relative proportion of the species in their holdings by adding "new" species as an adaptation to radical change in the environment. The effectiveness of these strategies, however, depends in part on their timing, i.e., the switch to more resilient species is done pre-emptively or reactively to drought. Pre-emptive response to drought means that pastoralists put in place adequate measures to cushion themselves and their animals against the adverse effects of an impending drought. The pre-emptive or preparedness measures to cope with the drought effects include herd reduction through sales, herd dispersion, salvage through slaughter, and ensuring household food security by engaging in non-pastoral economic activities to boost family income. The second mitigation strategy used by pastoralists, which can be considered a reactive response to drought is to move elsewhere, where pastoralists and their animals move to areas with better pastures and water. Reactive responses are more common in pastoral situations, except when movement has become so automatic that there is not a current threat to life

or livelihood. The key contingent variable here is mobility as a survival strategy to respond to the vagaries of drought. Pastoralists carry out reconnaissance missions (sahan or illala in Somali) and move with their livestock to identified areas with adequate water and vegetation.

Whatever the circumstance, famine continues underreported in the Northeastern province and this usually leads to less food aid interventions. Sufficient advance warning against droughts and other natural calamities can enable pastoral communities to plan and prepare themselves against adversities, and work with non governmental organizations to reach those who need food aid the most. Some of the ways in which pastoral communities could prepare themselves against drought risks include the storage of food grains, and the preservation of milk and meat through the combination of traditional, and possibly modern methods. These hybridized intermediary methods for milk and meat preservation are discussed below.

4.2 Food Security Safety Nets

During the past thirty years, a series of below average rainy seasons spread over two or three years lead to the erosion of food reserves to the point where traditional coping mechanisms have failed and famine has followed. Under extreme conditions severe malnutrition and even deaths may become widespread. Relief strategies adopted by authorities are typically grain provision or temporary housing aid. There has been little attempt hitherto to involve pastoralists in their own resilience through the improved management and utilization of their livestock resources, with long-term survival in mind. Research evidence has shown that pastoralists do not usually employ coping strategies

(for example, milk and meat preservation) at times of and in anticipation of austerity (Field, 2000). During periods of abundant milk (i.e., rainy seasons and post rains) the surplus milk could be prepared and stored for later use. Milk is a highly perishable commodity that in a tropical climate becomes unfit for human consumption within a day or two. Preservation of milk by Somalis is therefore mostly restricted to short-term measures by smoking the containers, fermenting or boiling the milk. The milking containers are generally disinfected with the burned wood of specific trees, e.g., Acacia horrida benadirensis or Acacia reficiens ('kansah'-Somali term) and the milk can thus be kept for two to three days longer than when it is fresh. Acacia horrida benadirensis and Acacia reficiens are trees that are abundant and widely available to use as a disinfectants. Camels' milk generally has better keeping quality than cow's milk. Generally, when women preserve milk and meat, the purpose is for ceremonial activities or for privileged male members of the family. It is not preserved for general family use during times of shortage. It is expected that fresh milk and meat will be continuously available.

Another way of storing milk is to convert it to traditional yoghurt. This product is called "itito or kalba daithak" (Boran and Somali) and can be preserved for three to five months. Butter and ghee from milk are other important products traditionally preserved for a longer shelf life, and ghee is the best cooking oil. Pastoral communities in Kenya could adopt more recent modern methods such as the use of hydrogen peroxide and pasteurisation. Controlled fermentation of milk, and the manufacture of condensed milk from surplus milk available could be stored as processed yoghurt for a period of six months or more depending on its concentration. Processing makes milk more stable for

transport to distant markets. Furthermore, preserved milk may offer an income generation source to use during hard times. Many dairy foods could also be manufactured with the help of a few basic modern methods. Modern methods that eliminate wastage of milk through spoilage include condensation of milk, pasteurisation, and controlled fermentation.

During droughts a great deal of meat may become available from dying cattle and camels. Under such circumstances, the quantity of meat available could easily exceed the capacity of the family or even settlement to utilize it immediately. Meat, especially from camels, is boiled, cooked, smoked or fried. Despite pastoral experiences with severe droughts in 1970 and the following years, pastoralists did not resort to slaughtering their animals for food preservation until the famine occurred. Decisions regarding whether animals should be slaughtered for food or not lies with men, as they invariably own the animals. Agencies and livestock production officers could help pastoral men understand the importance of slaughtering animals that may not survive, while the animals still have some value. Preservation of meat during abundance is necessary for use at times of adversity, hence, there is a strong need to train local pastoral women to prepare and preserve "nyirinyiri". Nyirinyiri, if fried well, can last for two years or longer.

FARM-Africa, a NGO in Kenya, has demonstrated the process to preserve milk and meat to a large number of pastoralists in Samburu, Marsabit and Moyale districts of Kenya, although the adoption process has been slow (Field, 2000). The slow adoption may be attributed to the trend for pastoralists to forget the hardships of drought and famine, and thus not carry out labour-intensive work to prepare for impending hardships.

Traditional skills for food preservation exist among the traditional Somali society, combined with a modern intermediate level of technology as discussed above, could significantly enhance food security. When immediate food sources become exhausted, adequate food preserved could enhance pastoral families' self-reliance.

Milk and meat preservation are labour intensive and are exclusively done by women. If the men free women from the burden of constant domestic duties, the labour time gained through this could be invested in the processes of food preservation. Preservation of milk requires planning and preparation. Women could be trained in organizational skills to enhance their ability to plan and prepare the milk preservation work. During the training women could also be taught some simple modern methods of food preservation and safe storage.

Preserved milk and meat, if processed on a large scale, could be sold in cities and marketed overseas. Somali emigrants and refugees from Kenya and the horn of Africa have placed a high premium on nyirinyiri. The main barrier to the market development of these products appears to be overseas authority health regulations regarding dried foreign meat. Despite this barrier, I suspect a great deal of the product still reaches the people of Somali origin in Toronto, Canada and is smuggled into the US. Its popularity and adoption rates may be high if an export market was legalized.

Other services required by pastoralists include literacy and education programs, and health programs for both human and animal diseases. An alternative service delivery model for pastoral people remains a big challenge.

4.3 Service Provision to Nomads

A general service provision inadequacy exits in the pastoral population due to their unique characteristics of high mobility and low population density (often less than 5 people per square km). Consequently, the service (for example, targeting school age children or pregnant women) need is too small in any one area to be cost-effective. For nomadic people, the service centres are often too far away to make their use feasible. To be effective, services provided have to respond to the unique local characteristics of pastoral nomads.

4.3.1 Public Health Care Services for People and Animals

Nomads share most diseases of other poor people such as cholera and typhoid, among others, but there are special features of their livestock system and nutrition that influence the incidence of their diseases. Their close proximity to animals make them especially susceptible to diseases associated with or facilitated by livestock, for example, tuberculosis and anthrax. Some features of nomads' nutrition have consequences for health. Diets high in milk may lead to health and nutrition complications, especially deficiency in iron, vitamin C, or vitamin A (AMREF, 1996; UNICEF, 1993). The Kenyan government, some donors, and local NGOs have made attempts to use markets, wells and other places where people gather as the location for health promotion, but important categories of people, especially women and children, are often missed by such methods. In Kenya, mobile health units that go to the settlement areas have been used most successfully for immunization campaigns, such as polio, measles and whooping cough, but fuel costs are high.

A study conducted in Mali confirmed immunizing one nomad cost ten times what it costs to immunize one sedentary person (Marty, 1985), suggesting that mobile health units are in most cases economically unviable when used on their own. Mobile health units should be used in conjunction with trained community health workers chosen from among the nomad population itself. Such community workers would be trained in both human and animal health services including some midwifery, paramedics and paravets training. Health aide candidates for such work should ideally have traditional healing skills and should be chosen in consultation with a local group. Trusted community health care workers could be trained as midwives to ensure live infants and healthy deliveries for mothers. This will bring nomadic women into contact with health services and give them the confidence to visit hospitals for treatment. Cultural attitudes among the Somali tribe create barriers and discourage the use of health care services by women, especially when attended to by male physicians. Public health programs that emphasize community awareness about diseases, especially those that impact women and children, could help breakdown some of the cultural attitudes that inhibit women from obtaining health care.

4.3.2 Literacy Program for the Pastoral People

Efforts to provide appropriate schooling for nomads has in general made even less headway than efforts to improve human health. Nomadic parents, as mentioned earlier, often feel their children are being taught skills in school that will equip them for a life outside the nomadic livelihood system. The fact that a child is in school at all means that he or she is not learning the practical skills of everyday herding, which cannot be acquired during holidays alone.

As mentioned earlier, Somali women do not generally go to school. A reflective understanding of one's culture, especially the costs of women's social exclusion, may be possible through the provision of education and training pastoral women. Furthermore, education can be a source of emancipation and can be a vehicle to redefine cultural values, the division of household labour, and the allocation of resources. As identified by Sen, women's access to education may enable them to improve their basic capabilities to enhance their personal autonomy and freedom of thought. An important issue likely to become more openly debated as women become educated is polygamy and the traditional male right of sexual access to a plurality of women. With education, these women may oppose polygamy and infidelity, and develop skills in organization and in argument, thus shaping the gender expectations of future generations. Education exposes women to other ways of understanding the gender expectations of their culture and may ultimately mobilize women to work toward basic structural change, which will strike at the core of long established male-female relationships.

Educated women from this region have achieved an education through hard work and determination, with limited support from their families. Unable to compete with men for job acquisition due to male preference, educated women are often employed professionally by non-governmental organizations. Educated ladies from the region could provide the foundation of a social movement to seek support from other women's organisations, such as Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE). Educated women in the region are a critical group for social change, given their access to power and representation as role models.

Regarding educational service provisions, state support for schools in the entire region has been inadequate for the last 39 years, and the quality of teachers has been low (Adawa, 1986). One exception is the Koranic schools common in Islamic nomad societies, where teachers bring together pupils (boys aged 5-14) from neighbouring camps to teach them the Koran. Those described by Adawa (1986) for the Somali-speaking pastoral areas of Northeastern Kenya are typical examples. These schools appear to be effective because religion is tied to the school. One way, therefore, to generate interest of nomadic women in education may be to combine it with religious activities. Primary teachers could be trained in a special tribal nomad education program to again tailor education more closely to the needs and culture of pastoral people.

In order to show parents, especially mothers, the advantages of education, a promising approach would be to start with adult education that will provide training in nutrition and hygiene. In Somalia, there is some experience of literacy programs for adult nomads, where classes were first held at wells and later in mobile schools. At its height, the campaign reached over a million people, the great majority of the nomads in Somalia (Mohamed 1975, 1982). Several experiments using these methods of mobile huts are under way in Mongolia (Swift, 1996). Although expensive to maintain, temporary hut schools may be affordable to operate, an important advantage where heating and electricity costs are avoided in permanent structures.

Education enhances the knowledge base and openness to experimentation and thus can contribute to sustainable institutional development for food security. Local institutions can promote pastoral people's collective interests, and thus enable them to

manage and coordinate their collective obligations (ALRM, 1999). The suggestions below may offer some opportunities to build on local institutions to improve pastoral people's entitlements for a continuous source of livelihood, thus improve their self-reliance.

Education and health are the two main tools with which women can make contributions. It is through education that women can be empowered to take advantage of new opportunities and to widen their slope of possibilities. A clear benefit of education, and a much gentler way of bringing in change, is to give women an opportunity. Women need to be given the opportunity to have a say in what directly affects their welfare and that of their particular community.

4.4 Building Better Institutions

Essentially, inadequate institutions currently exist to assist the pastoral population. Policy platforms for pastoral people could stress the need to enhance and support local associations of livestock producers (such as pastoral water users' associations, drugs users' associations, and women groups'). Herders' organizations have a central role in pastoral development. Their functions include natural resource management and fulfilling a variety of other services such as marketing milk, processing and preservation of meat, and advocacy for government assistance. For example, local pastoral associations can promote market networks that are designed to have direct connections to main national markets for the sale of animals and animal products (e.g. hides and skins, milk and meat). In general, facilitating marginalized groups through

community-oriented interventions will stimulate their empowerment and provide inroads for greater local control over food security.

Restocking of livestock for destitute pastoral and settled women in NEP could play a key role in the move towards a more productive pastoral economy. Restocking involves the replacement of camels, sheep and goats for those families who lost their livestock through drought, conflict, and diseases, so they can return to their previous way of life. Currently, few restocking programs exist throughout NEP. A report on restocking programs through the Wajir Oxfam pastoral development program has indicated some positive progress to restocked beneficiaries in Wajir (see map) (Oxfam, 1999). Other developmental agencies could evaluate the existing experiences of such NGOs' efforts and support similar innovative approaches for greater socio-economic change. The success stories from such local initiatives that are structured to meet women's needs could be copied across similar areas.

For instance, a key micro-enterprise project in Wajir's Oxfam development programme is the sanitary milk processing units for women's groups that accompanied successful restocking programs in the Wajir District. According to an article by Nduma et. al (2000), economic diversification is one of the most effective ways for people to move out of poverty. In an effort to diversify economic activities and incorporate risk-reducing economic strategies, micro-enterprising women's groups should be given priority in government support and NGO interventions. Furthermore, Rae Blumerg (1991) believes that micro-enterprises are a source of empowerment for women. Nikoi (1991) and Wijetilleke (1991) agree with Blumberg and point out that women involved in

micro-enterprises are less dependent on their fathers, husbands, and sons for economic survival, and the incidences among these women of malnutrition, diseases, and illiteracy among their families, also decreases.

It should be noted that research information on the promotion of micro-enterprising institutions for pastoral development is limited (Provincial livestock report, NEP, 2001). Potential poverty alleviation strategies may include emphasis on research that should take into account the design of loan programs in terms of accountability and accounting, as well as suitability for women's needs. Also, more research is needed on the extended economic and social benefits of women's participation in micro-enterprise development initiatives, especially where women are burdened by other roles. It is important to have stronger evidence of socio-economic benefits of local development institutions to lure and raise the confidence of development intervention programs leaders and policy makers.

5.0 Conclusion

Poverty creates physical weakness (lack of food and then sickness), vulnerability (diseases and death) leading the poor to live in isolation, and that promotes powerlessness. The lack of benefits (entitlements) and lack of bargaining power (capability) perpetuates poverty (Chambers 1993, 1994,1997). Sen's work is parallel with Chambers's ideas, and throughout their writing of 1980s and 1990s they encouraged researchers to examine the entitlement and capabilities of those experiencing deprivation. This study that embraces Sen's approach has addressed major factors responsible for long-term food insecurity in NEP, Kenya. Specifically, the study is about women and their place in the subsistence production of Somali pastoral society, as nomadic housewives, milk managers, and mothers. In order to define an agenda of priorities for government and aid agencies, the study suggests mechanisms to improve their livelihoods and potentials, and provides ideas for further research in this area.

It is evident from this study that pastoralism has lost resilience and has become less viable with increasing human population and as pastoral people become sedentary. The declining productivity of the natural resource base, climatic changes that favour aridity, and numerous other impediments lead to the impoverishment of pastoral communities. In addition, the gender bias rooted in Kenya's cultural and ethnic traditions has discriminated against women by denying women entitlements, such as land and livestock, credit, inputs, agricultural extension and training. The distribution of resources within a home in Kenya generally exhibits male bias.

Similarly, the traditional division of labour overburdens women who have labourious chores such as fetching water, fuel wood and marketing milk. This suggests that the labour shortages are critical for pastoral families. Nomadic pastoral households with adequate family labour have a greater likelihood of diversifying their economy for food security. This means that if the priority of nomadic households is to satisfy their basic subsistence needs, all able members in pastoral households may need to devote their available labour to household food production. Sharing work responsibilities between men and women would be an option to alleviate women's intensive work and provide more attention to preparing for drought.

Access to basic infrastructure and participation of the poor in the development process is expected to have a positive link to both economic and social-political stability. Failure to invest in good health, for example, undermines even the best-laid development plans. Under these circumstances, the sustained fight against poverty by donors, NGOs and government could be geared towards the provision of basic social services, such as health care and primary education. Primary health care for people and animals can contribute to increased pastoral welfare. There is a need to pool resources for human and animal health care using a community-based approach, i.e., community health workers trained in animal and human health services, who can administer medication and treatment to humans and animals, and who are periodically supervised by health professionals and paravets. Human and animal immunization campaigns, for example, could be run simultaneously.

By achieving greater food security and boosting agricultural output pastoralists can create a more diverse and stable means of livelihood to insulate themselves and their household members from external shocks. Successful development efforts could emphasize building on existing traditional methods with simple and sustainable intermediate modern technologies for milk and meat preservation, accompanied with further research on the socio-economic viability for various modern methods of food preservation. The target population for research and training should be women because milk and meat preservation processes are exclusively their responsibility.

Scholars have many more contributions to make with in-depth analyses that reflect both a good understanding and a critical view of the cultural milieu that shapes Somali women's lives. In this regard, the contributions of indigenous female scholars would be especially helpful, especially in the area of education and local organization as catalysts for change. My hope is that this study will reveal alternative possibilities for pastoral women and their families that will enable them to survive the ravages of drought and other disasters responsible for food insecurity in NEP, Kenya.

In sum, a policy to improve food security needs measures to improve the access of poor people, especially women, to productive resources, together with an increase in the general productivity of the household economy. First and foremost, women must have rights to their livestock by law. The greatest impediment to women's optimal livestock production is the lack of ownership of the animals. Access to ownership of these valuable resources will guarantee these women access to sales of livestock, especially in the absence of their spouses. The international development donors involved in pastoral

livestock management in the northern arid lands should be aware of the productive and rational ways women utilize scarce and patchy resources. The incorporation of pastoral women's intellectual and physical efforts in the design and implementation of pastoral-assistance programs and policies is important for their social and economic progress. If the government of Kenya and NGOs are to revitalize the pastoral sector and improve household food security, raising the productivity of pastoral women may be the centrepiece agricultural strategy.

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